

Alone Together: Investigating Time Experienced Physically
in the Context of Contemporary Communication Technologies

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I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the artist alone. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award. The content of the ADR is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date and the approved research.

Jeremy Bakker

7th February 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Angela Pye, Fran van Riemsdyk, Rhett D'Costa, Alan Roberts, Dom Redfern, Doris Tainsh, Dimple Rajyaguru, John Billan, John Brash, Trent Griffiths, Lynn Thomson and my family - thank you for being so generous with your time and support.

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PROJECT PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

This project stems from contradictory feelings I have about my increased reliance on media and communication technologies such as mobile phones, internet, laptop and TV. I am interested in how the daily use of media and communication technologies contributes to an accelerated sense of time. The goal is to make art that engages both a notion of time experienced through the body and a more rapid sense of time experienced through the use of these technologies. Manual and tactile art techniques such as mark-making will focus on how I physically encounter and interact with communication technologies and the information they carry. Completed over 3 years, studio work will be undertaken with the goal of encouraging the viewer to consider the physical aspects of how time is experienced in the context of contemporary media and communication technologies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What techniques, processes and materials can I use to respond to the rapid and fragmentary digital information I encounter daily?
2. How can I make art that evokes a tactile, immersive and contemplative experience for the viewer?

BACKGROUND

The context of this project is in art practices where personal representations of time and place are expressed through direct material and ritualized processes. Slow and methodical gestures of marking and collating to evoke a personal and physical presence are central to the work of artists such as On Kawara, Ann Hamilton, Roman Opalka, Tom Friedman and Hanne Darboven. For each, the physical process of marking can be seen as a personal tracking of temporality and duration that draws from, but is not limited to, the conventional systems of measuring time (such as clocks and calendars).

In *Today Series* On Kawara paints the actual date of his act of painting and accompanies this with a hand-made box lined with a clipping of the local newspaper from that day. As Lynne Cooke remarks, Kawara's work emphasizes that the "objectively determined" concept of time measured in calendar dates are "nonetheless always and finally subjectively experienced through the present moment."¹ Roman Opalka is similarly preoccupied with the subjectivity of experiencing time and the objective systems used to measure it. *1965: 1—∞* is an absurdly meticulous ongoing work where, since 1965, Opalka has been painting consecutive integers in streams of numbers filling canvases [left to right, top to bottom] methodically counting his way to infinity. The obsessiveness and persistent singularity of each of these practices suggests an enduring contemplation of the complex relationship between sub-

jective experiences of time and the 'objective' systems of measuring and making sense of time. For my project I will test similar ritualized methods such as repetitive mark-making but do so in terms of how this sense of time encounters time experienced through media and communication technologies.

The material accumulation of a repeated gesture is a common thread through many of Ann Hamilton's installations. For Hamilton, the extended and repetitive manual processes highlight the commodified time of manual labour in factory production. For the purposes of this project I am interested in the implied slowness of these accumulated gestures and the singular attentiveness suggested by the ongoing, repetitive work. I will test repetitive mark-making techniques as a way of representing a shift between a physical experience of time and the more rapid time of media and communication technologies.

METHODS

This project will explore several areas of practise such as drawing, painting, sculpture and video.

I will begin by testing methods of mark-making to transfer the fleeting and immaterial information of media and communication technologies into an enduring material form. For example, I will experiment with handwriting as a way of transcribing spoken information I overhear from the TV, podcasts and radio at home. I will consider the relationship between the scale of the writing to the scale of the drawing's support as a way of condensing information and translating visually the difficulties of 'making sense' of information presented rapidly and through multiple, interconnecting paths. I will test ways of complicating the traditional linear reading of the text through the layering and patterning of what is written.

Another studio process to be tested will be a ritualized technique of casting and collating thousands of my own thumbprints using melted beeswax. I will test ways of arranging and displaying these thumbprints in order to suggest an unstable kind of duration and presence to fleeting moments subjectively experienced.

RATIONALE

My contribution to the field will be to make art that focuses on two aspects of experiencing time today—the temporality of the body and of media and communication technologies. By translating digital information through manual, handmade processes I am highlighting a difference in tempo between media sources (the instantaneity of information on the internet, TV, mobile phone and radio) and the slower tempo of the individual body in physical time and space. Rather than rejecting one tempo for the other, or resisting the inevitability of technological change and its impact on how we communicate, the work will be open enough for the viewer to project their own uncertainties related to how time is experienced physically in an increasingly digital environment.¹

¹ http://www.diacenter.org/exhibits_b/kawara/essay.html#two viewed 4/7/07

INITIAL STUDIO RESEARCH

White Noise

Initial studio tests focused on attempts to mimic TV static through paintings, sculpture and stop-motion animation.

Opposite:

Testing materials for making an animated (stop-motion) TV static video (2006)
Acrylic paint, rice bubbles, bowl.

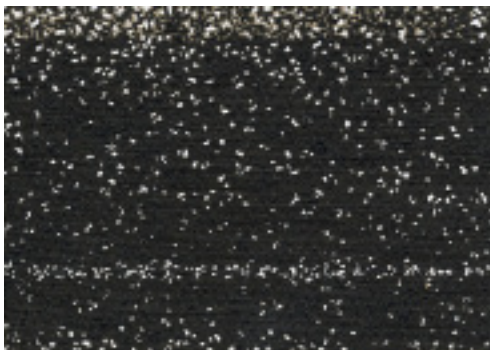




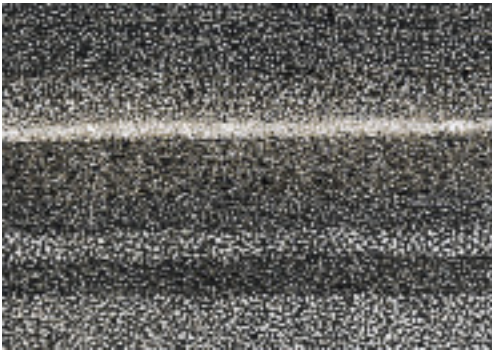
Above:
Untitled sketch (2006)
Paper collage
15 x 15cm

Opposite:
Studio test (2006)
TV, Rice Bubbles, acrylic paint





Static (2006)
Acrylic on linen
18 X 12.5cm (9 units)

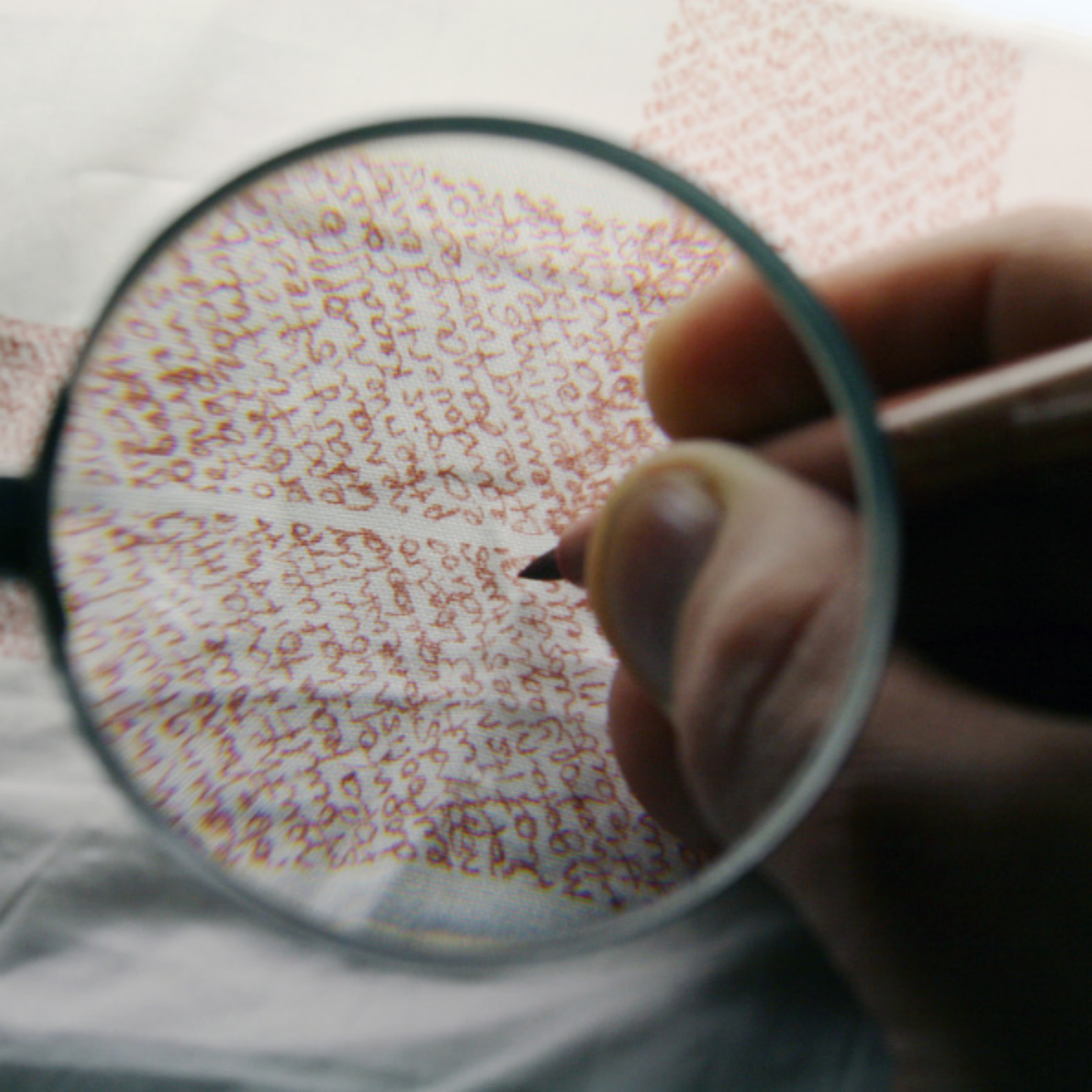


Absorbed

Working from home, this unfinished project involved listening to TV, radio and computer podcasts, writing down all dialogue overheard (as best as was possible) in a 'real time' transcription. Written onto fabric in a plaid pattern, the intention was to use this handwritten material to upholster onto an armchair.

Pages 9-16:
Absorbed (2006-8) (details)
Polycotton, marker, pencil
500 x 180cm

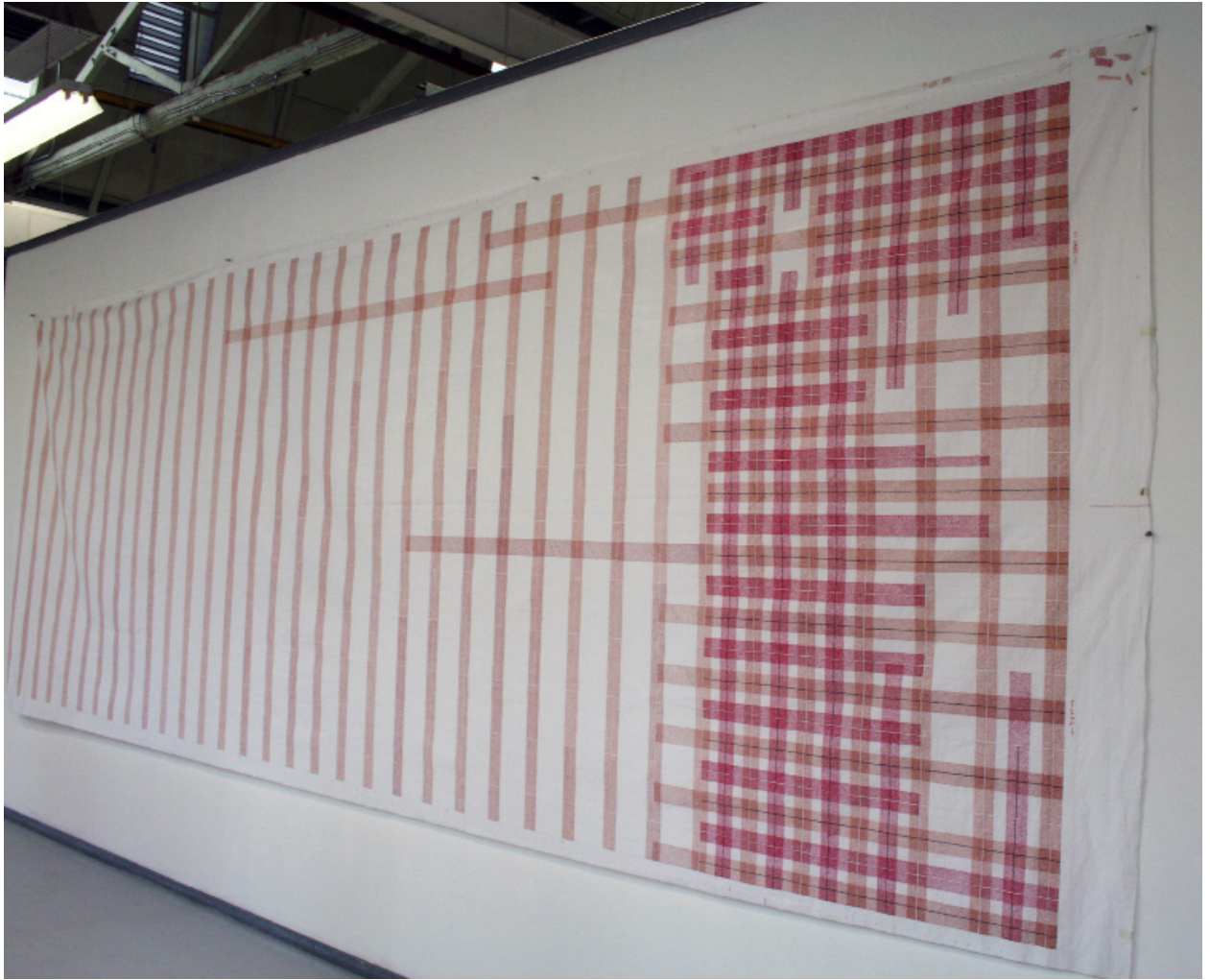














← START →

RESOLUTION

Intimate Distance

A solo exhibition, *Alone Together*, held at
Bus Gallery, June 2008.

Opposite:

Alone Together (2008)
Digital print mounted on aluminium
127 x 150cm

Pages 19-20:

Detail of *Alone Together* (2008)
Digital print mounted on aluminium
127 x 150cm

Pages 21-22:

Installation shot, *Alone Together* (2008)
Bus Gallery









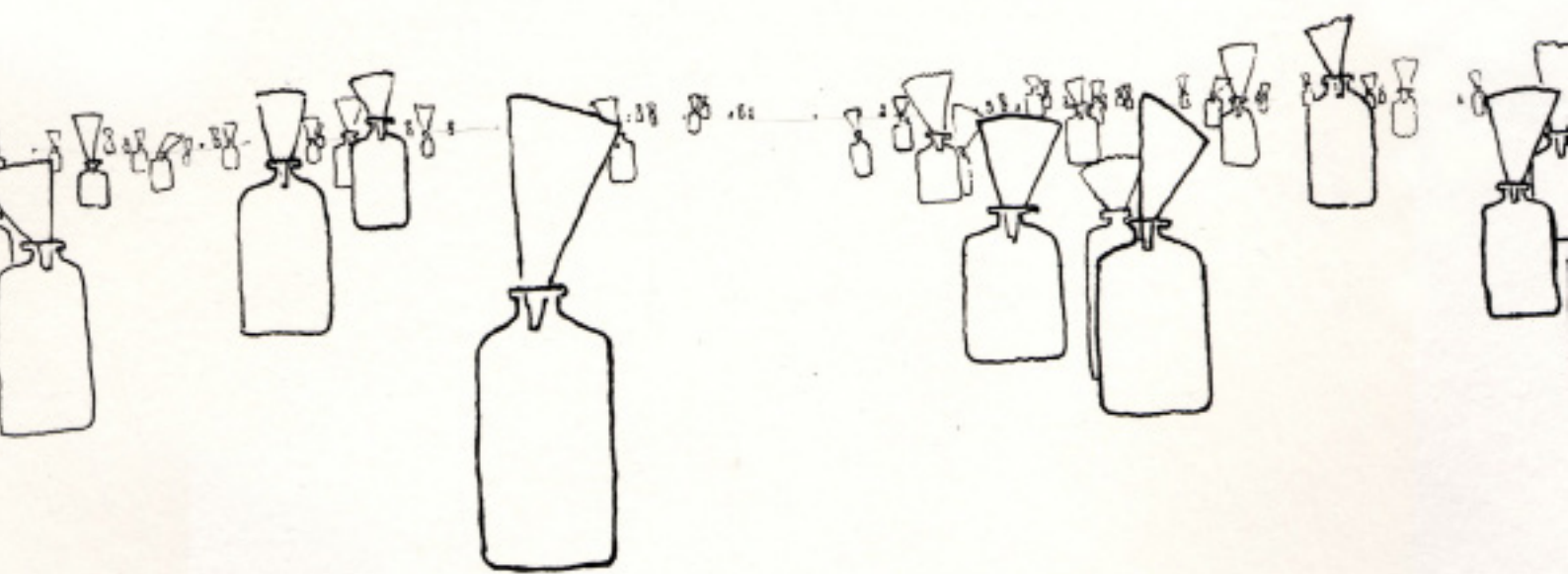


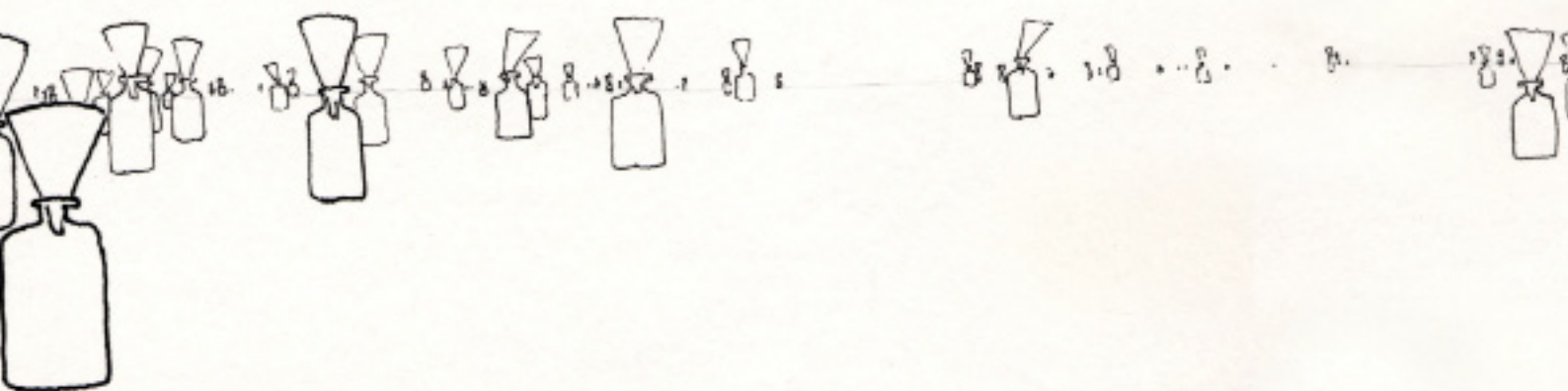
Installation shot, *Alone Together* (2008)
Bus Gallery

Opposite:
Collected Ends: 6365 fullstops (2008)
Paper, glass bottle, plinth
7 x 7 x 105cm

Page 25-26:
Untitled sketch (2008)
Pen and pencil on paper
45 x 22cm







Quiet (2008)
Earplugs, acrylic paint, shelf
7 x 5 x 4cm



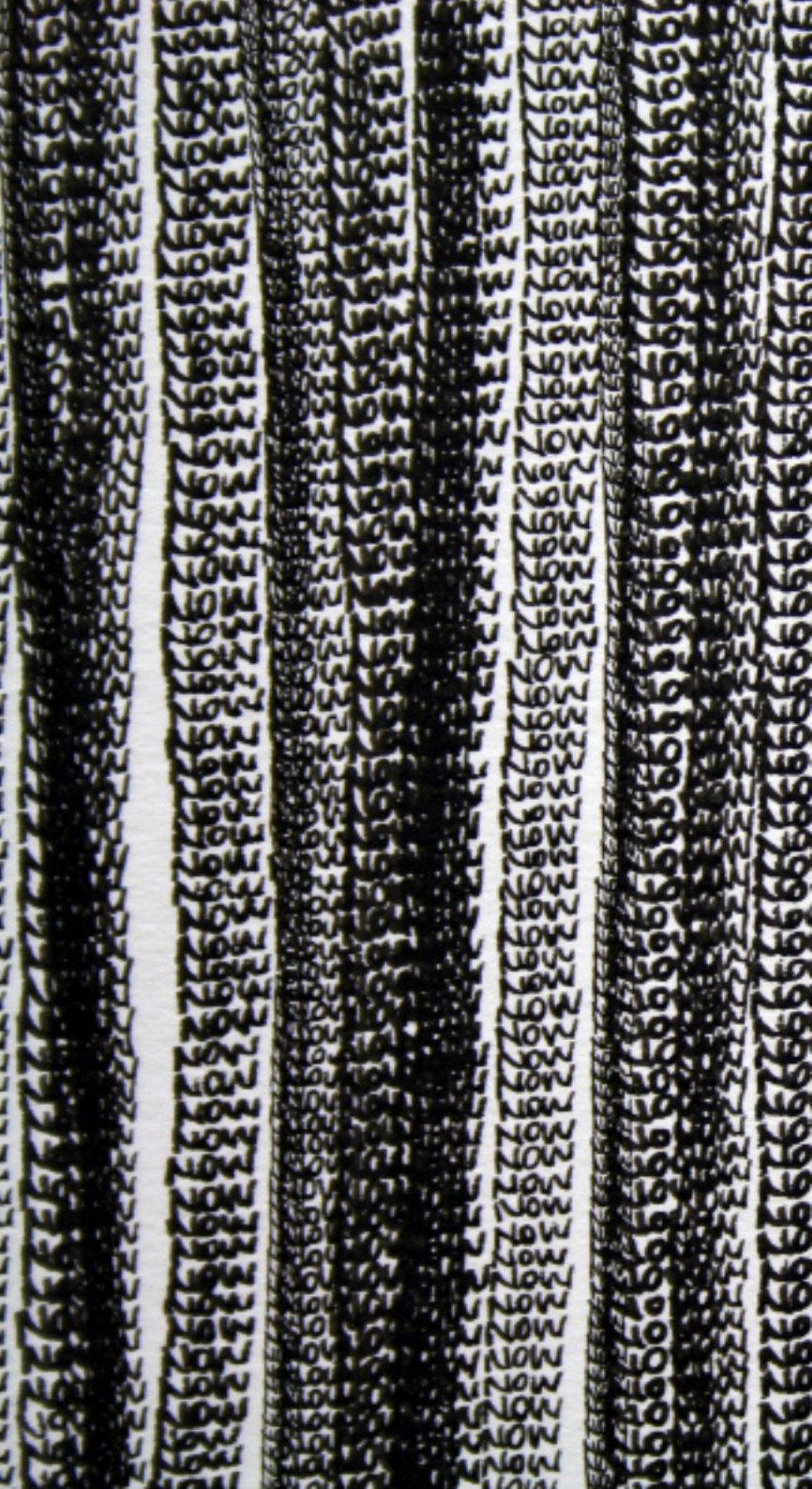
Pages 31-32:
Detail of *Tinnitus* (2008)
Pen on paper
70 x 100cm

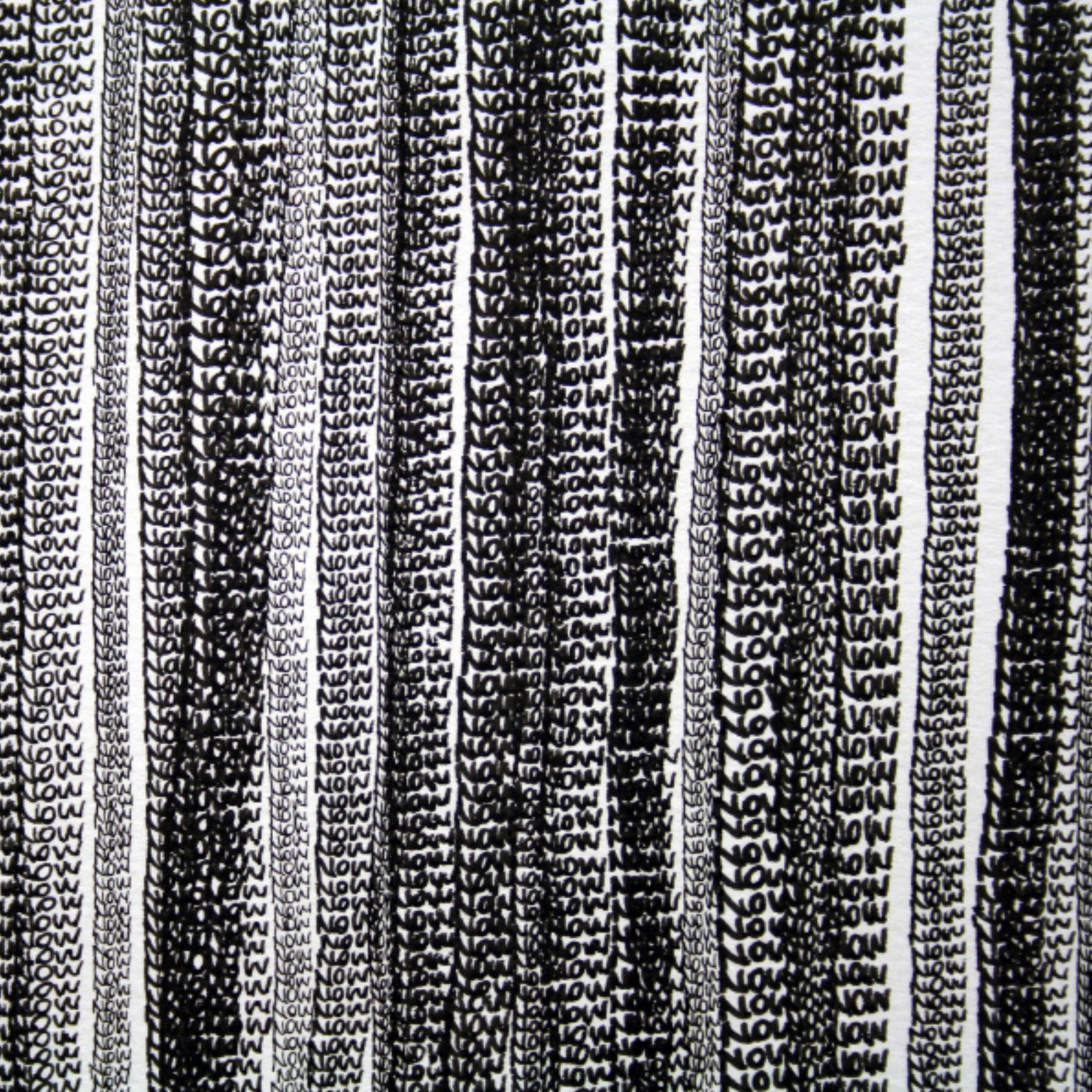
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Pen on paper
70 x 100cm

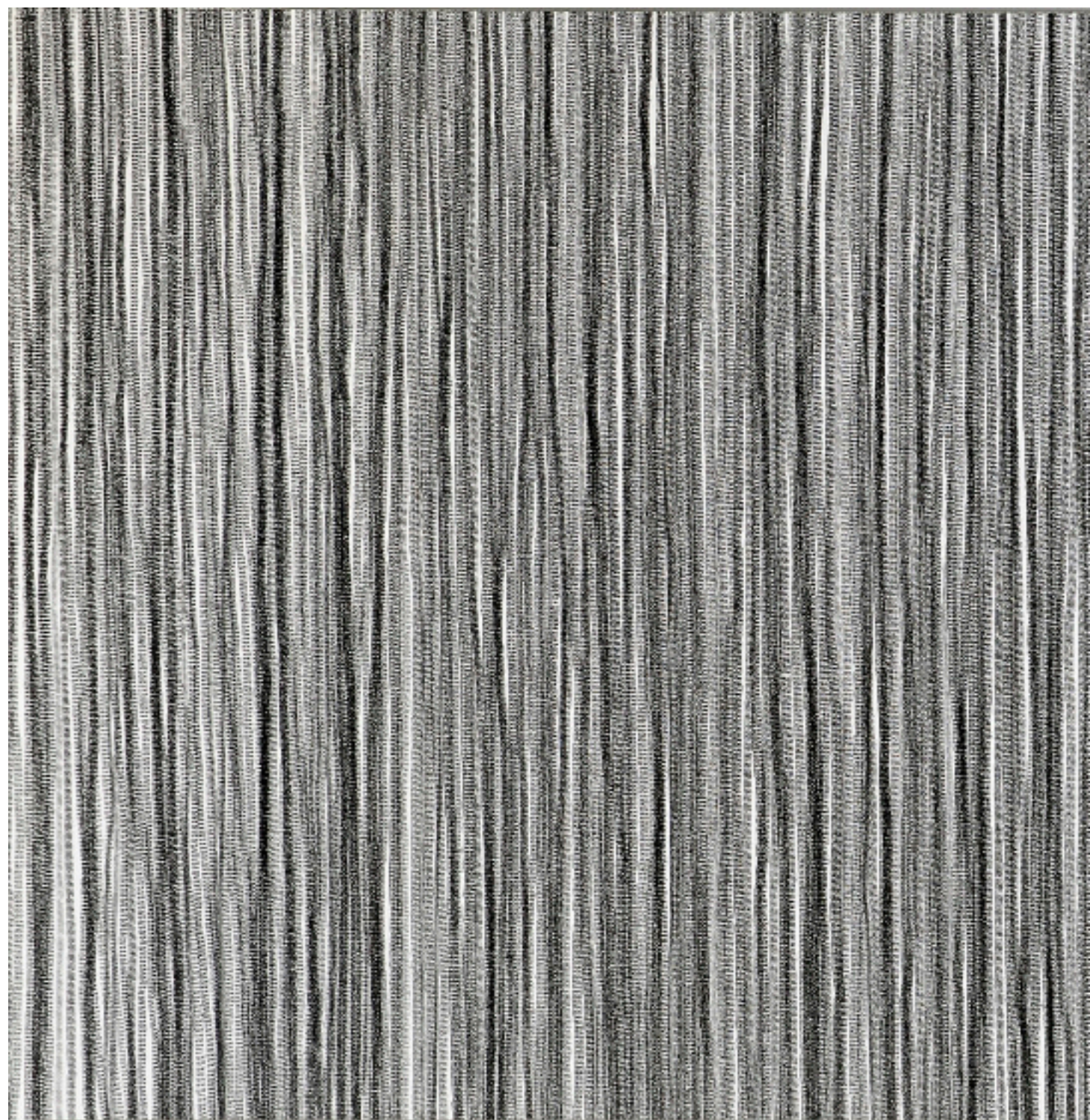
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Time-lapse 'stills' from *Arc* (2008)
Stop-motion DVD -
6min 20 second loop (4 'still' images)

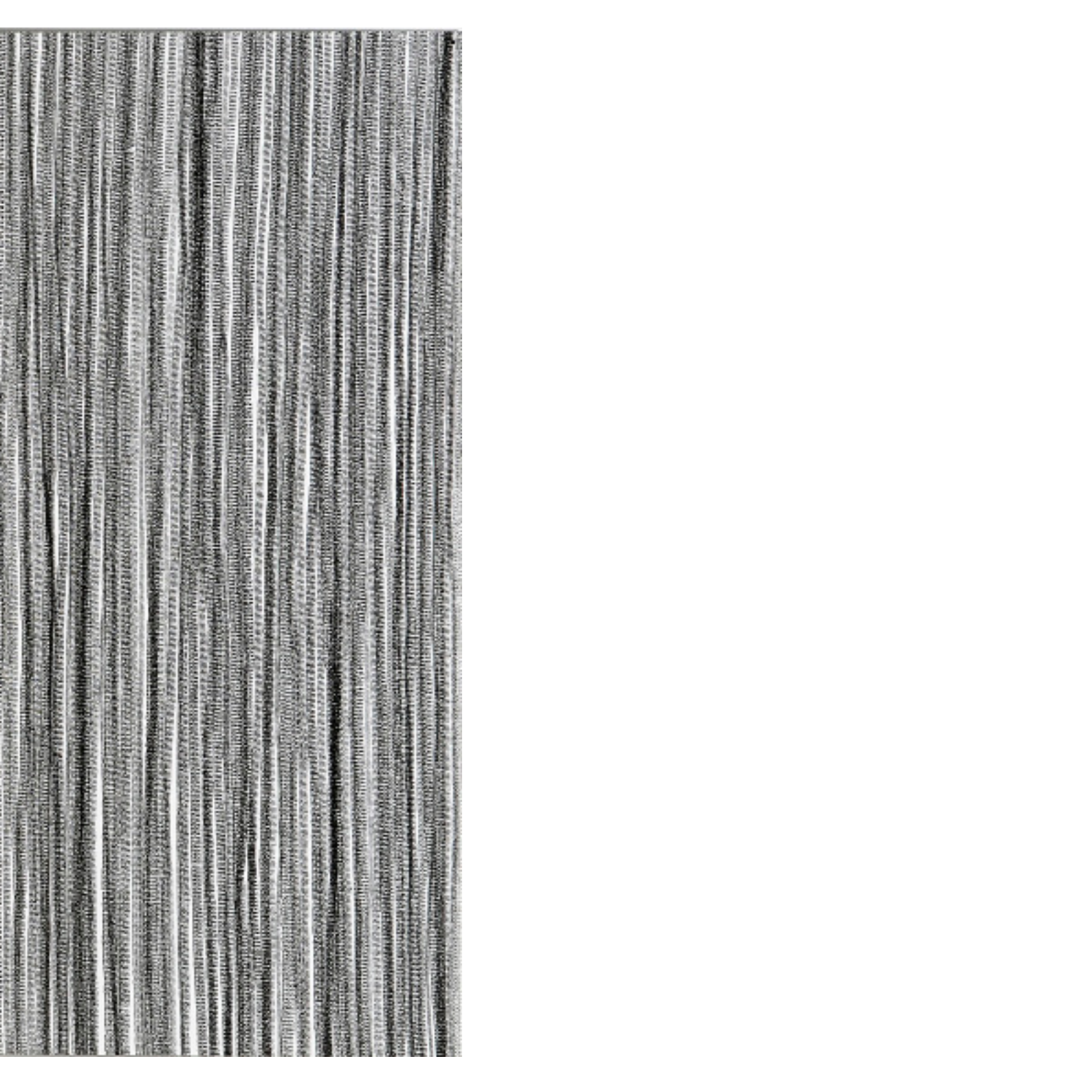
Pages 37-38:
Installation shot, *Alone Together* (2008)
Bus Gallery

Now



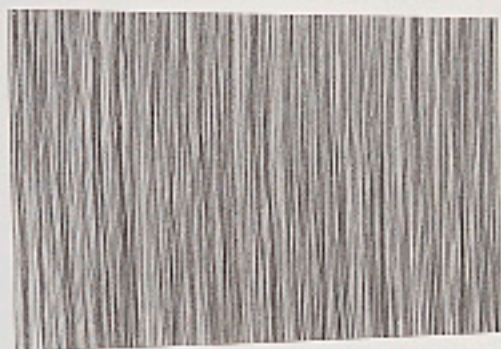




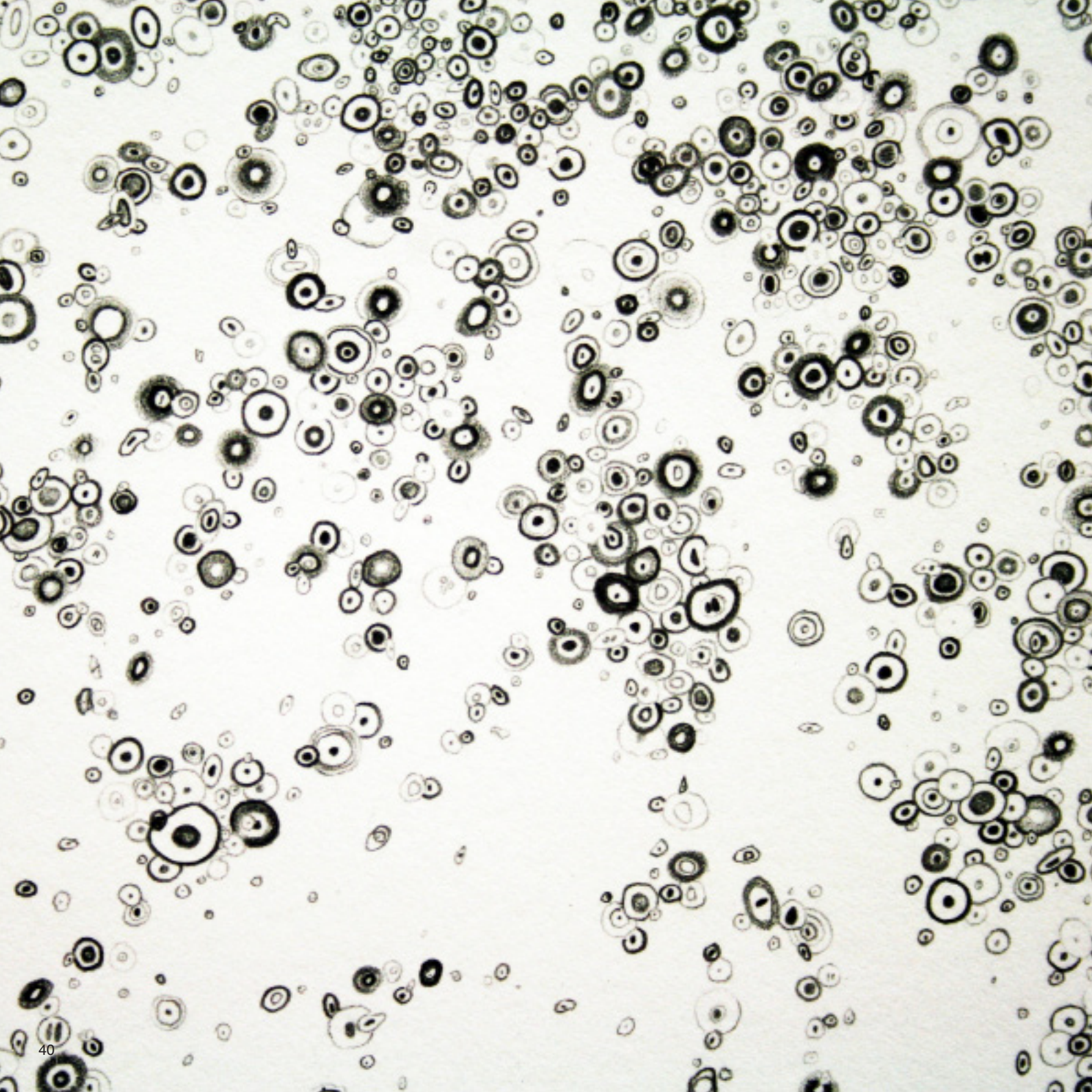












Detail of *Cluster* (2008)
Pencil on paper
77 x 56cm

Cluster (2008)
Pencil on paper
77 x 56cm



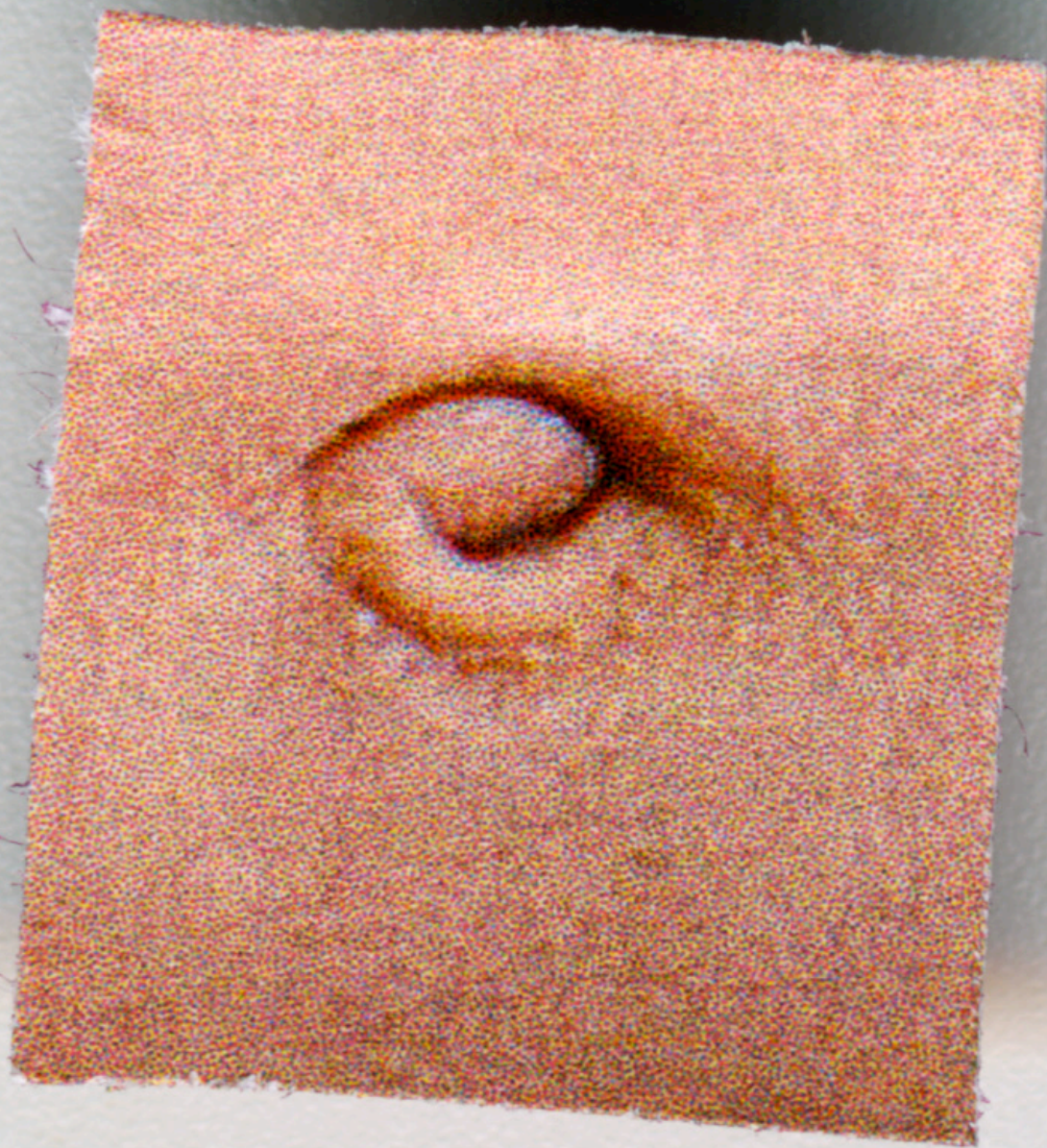
Closer (2008)
Paper and magazine collage
75 x 150 x 5cm



Amplifications

Studio tests for a proposed collage work that incorporates hundreds of bellybutton 'cones' similar to those made for *Closer* (2008) above.

Opposite:
Extracted navel - source material for
Amplifications (2008)
Paper (magazine)
1 x 1cm



Source material for *Amplifications* (2008)
Assorted magazines



Studio test - bellybutton cone (2008)
Paper and magazine collage
Dimensions variable

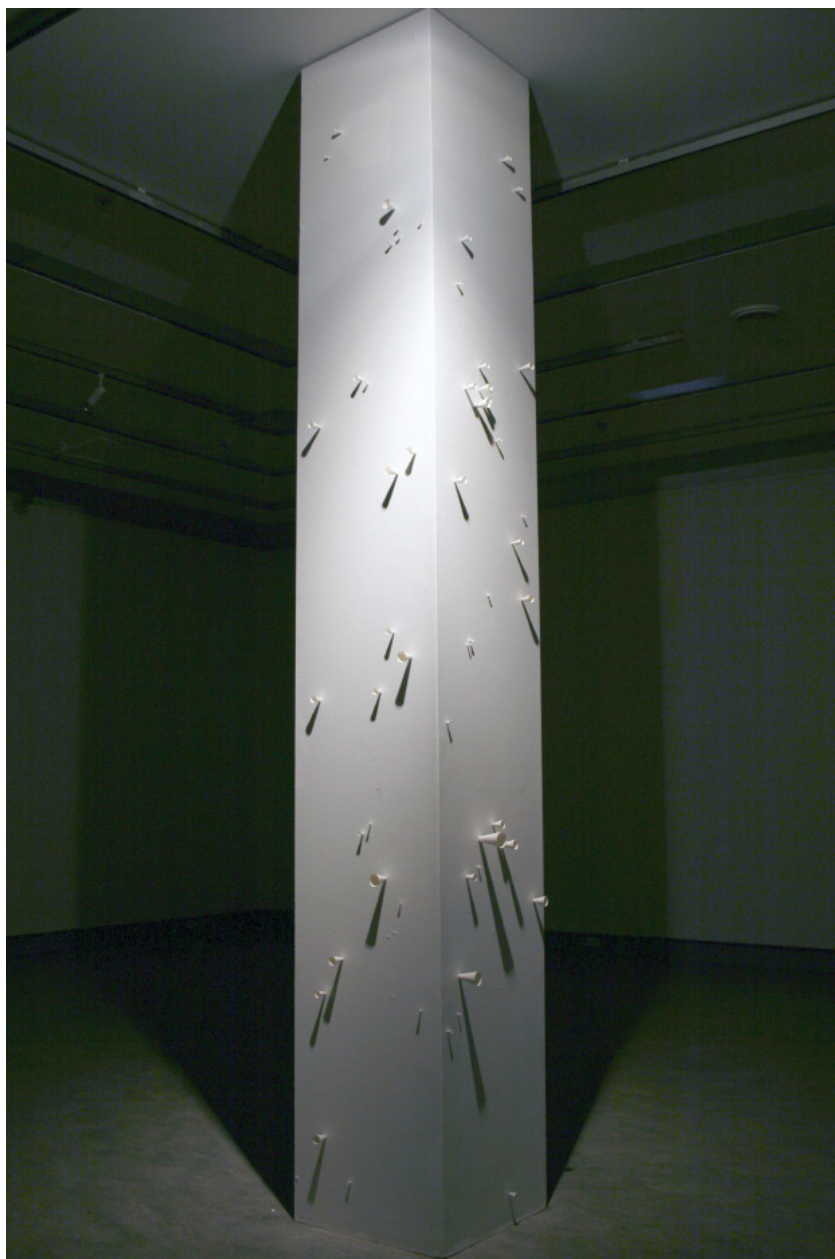


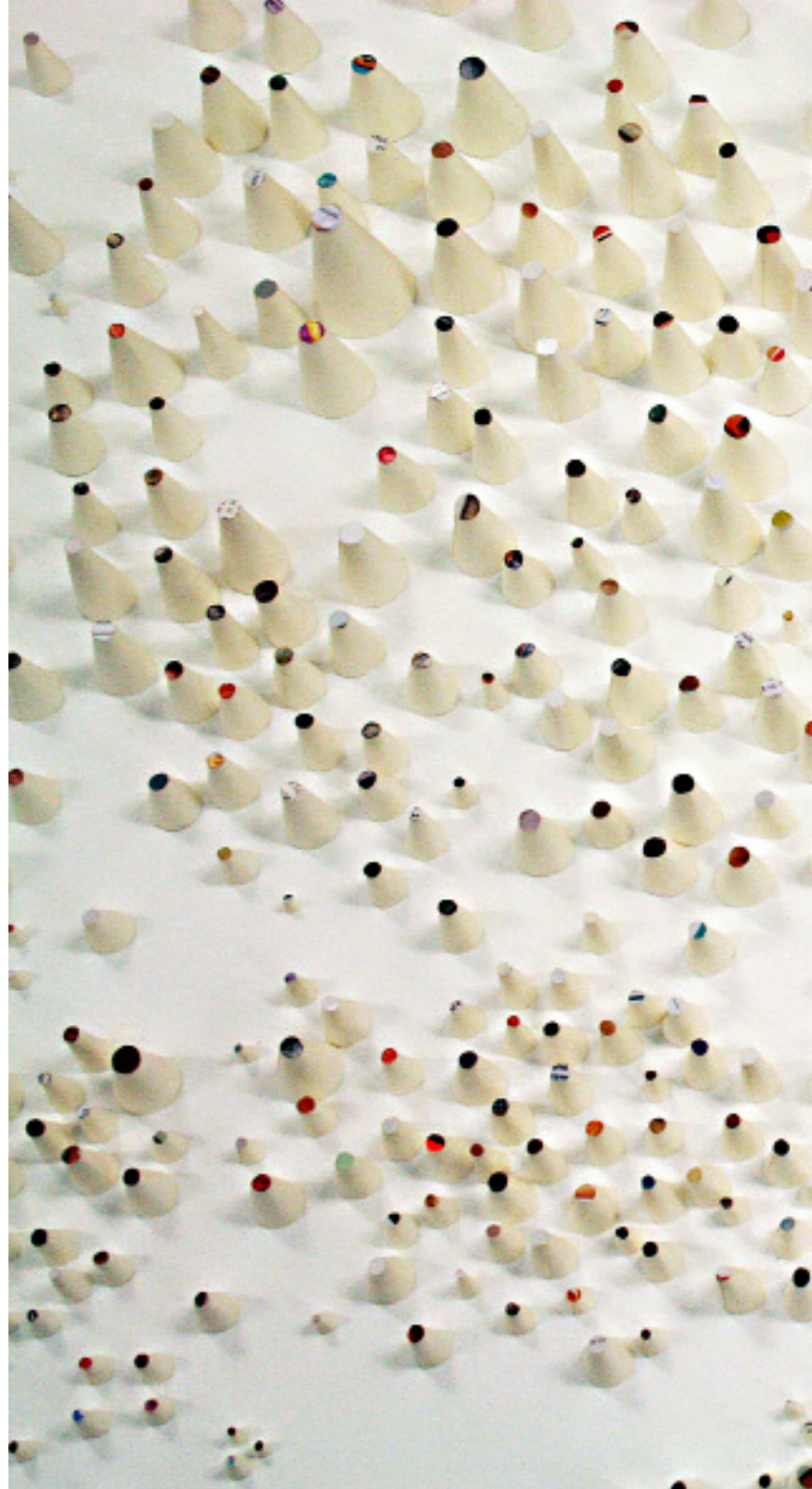


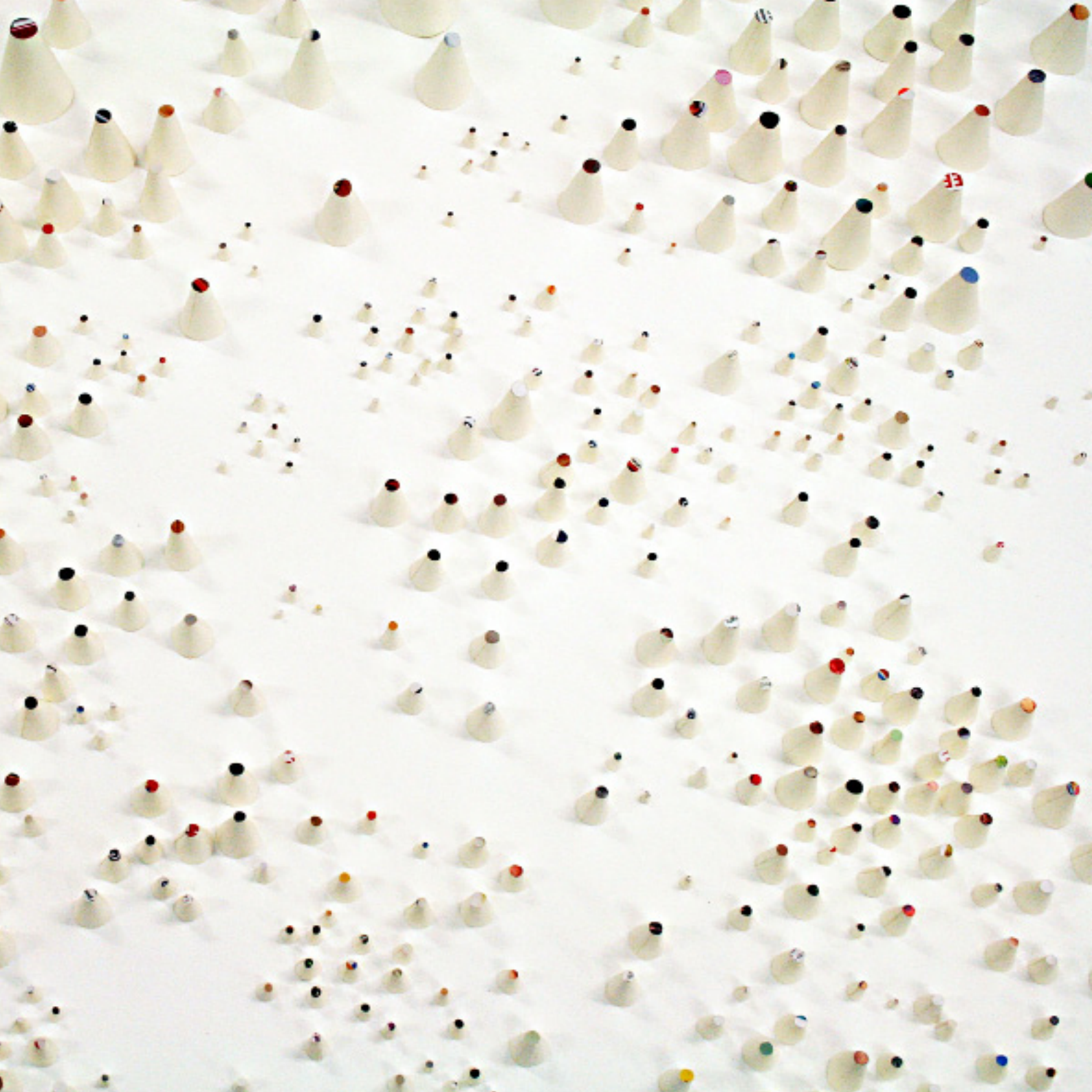
Studio test - bellybutton cone (reversed) (2008)
Paper and Magazine collage
Dimensions variable



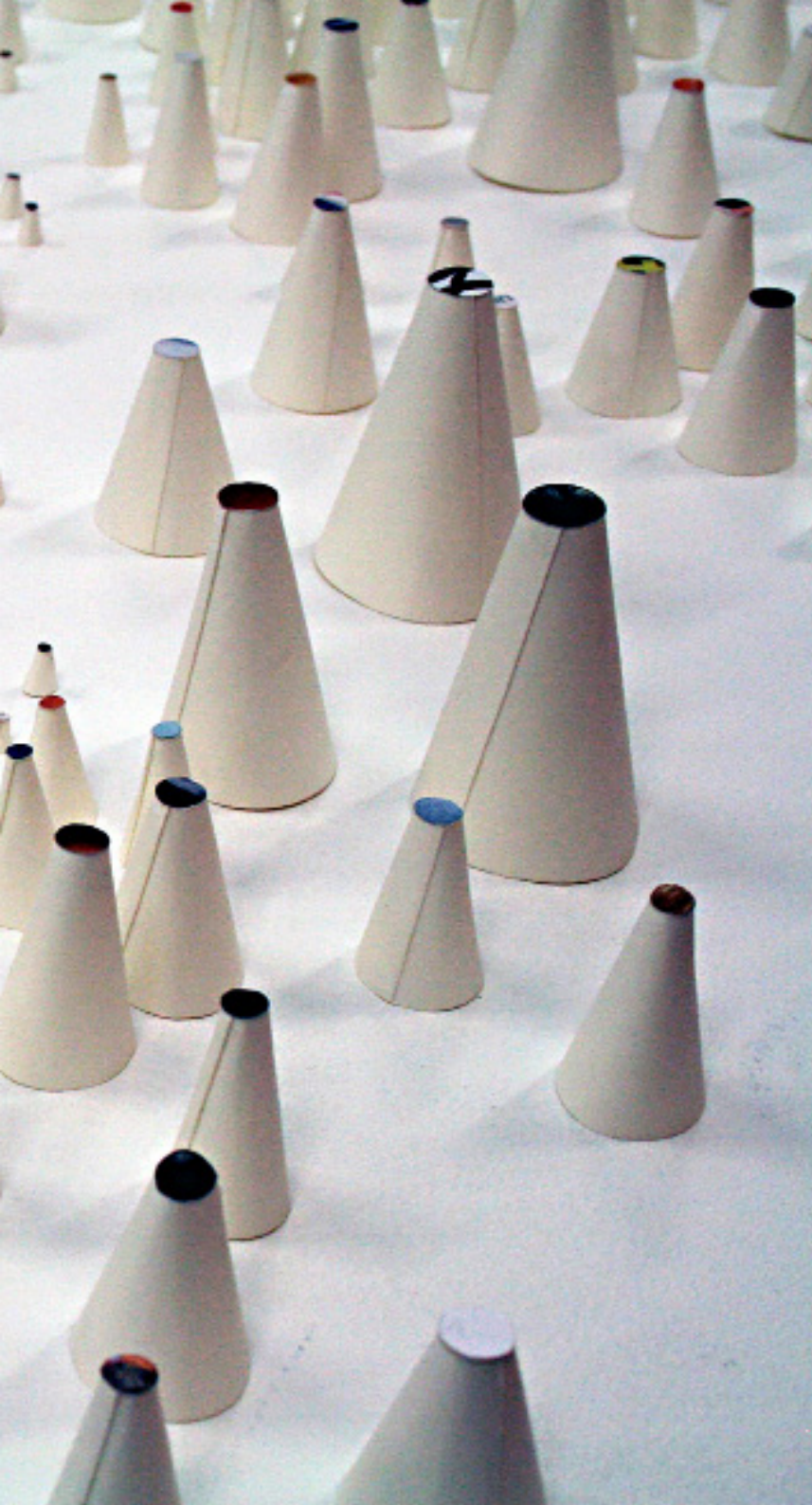
Pages 53-58:
Studio tests for *Amplifications* (2009)











Iteration

An ongoing collection of my thumbprints cast in melted beeswax. The installation *Creeping* was made for the group exhibition *Wigga* (with James Hullick), Shifted Gallery, October 2008.

Opposite:
Documentation of the thumbprint casting process using melted beeswax (2008)

Pages 61-62:
Studio test - detail of thumbprints (2008)
Beeswax
Dimensions variable

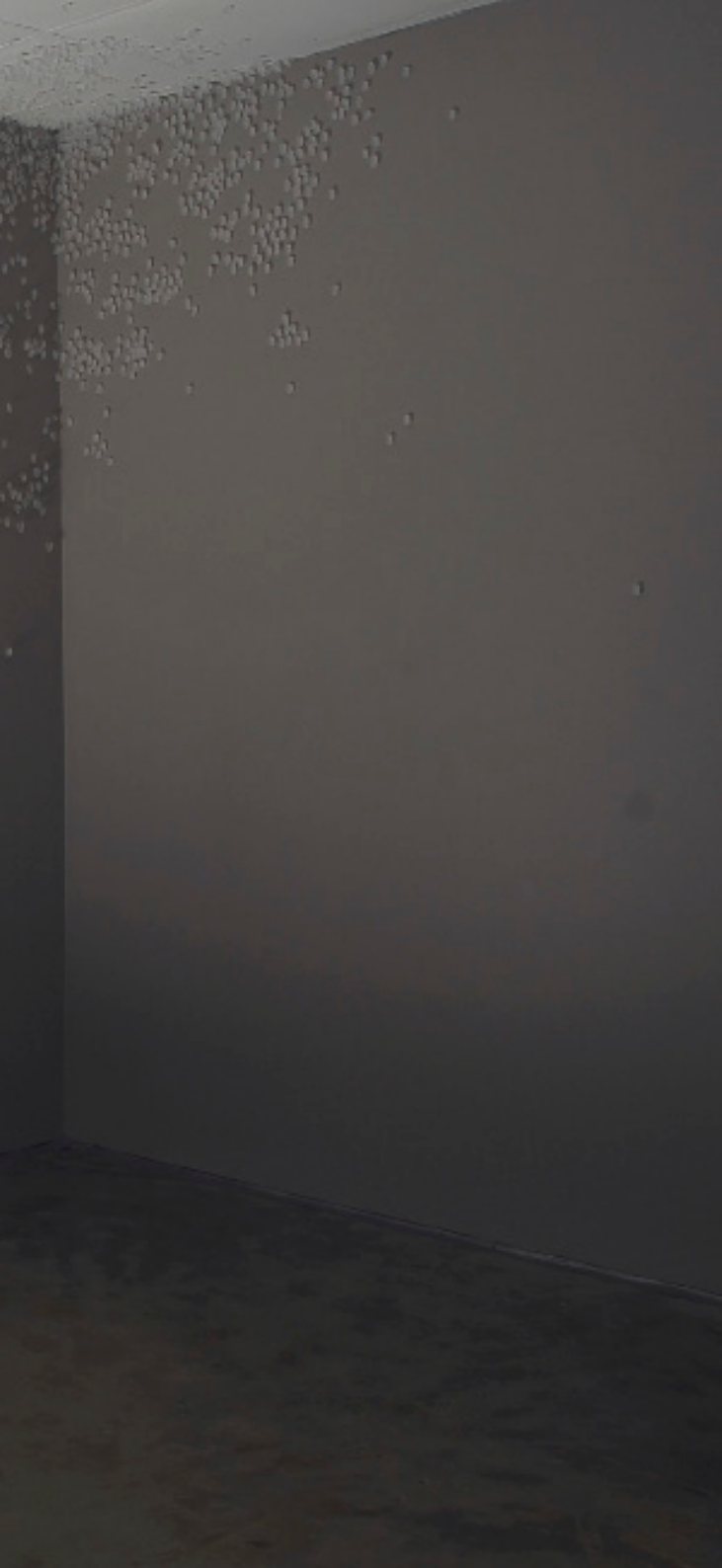
Pages 63-64:
Installation view, *Creeping* (2008)
From the group exhibition:
Wigga, Shifted gallery
Beeswax, lightbox, dress making pins











Pages 66-72

Creeping (2008) (Detail)

From the group exhibition:

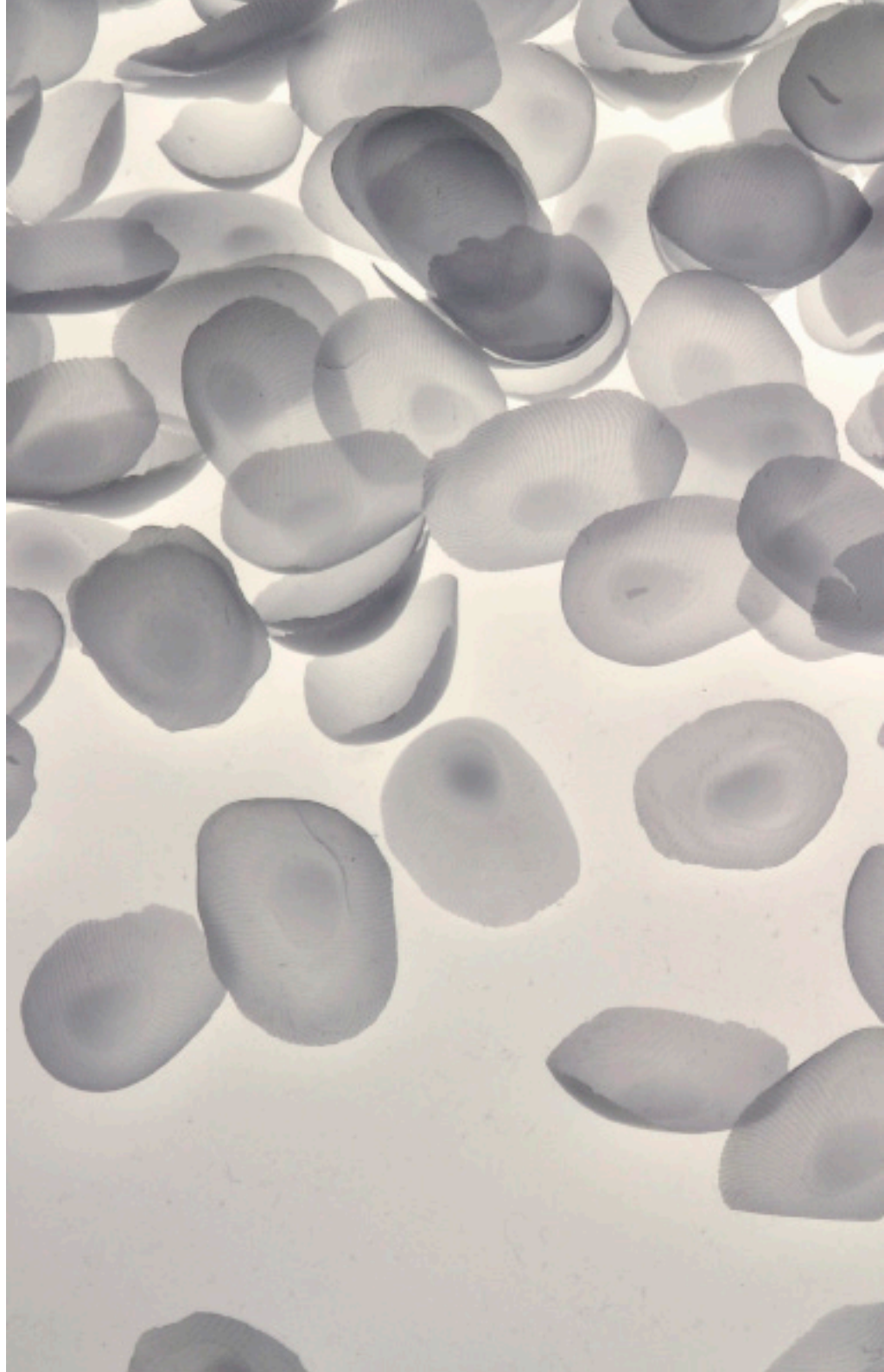
Wigga, Shifted gallery

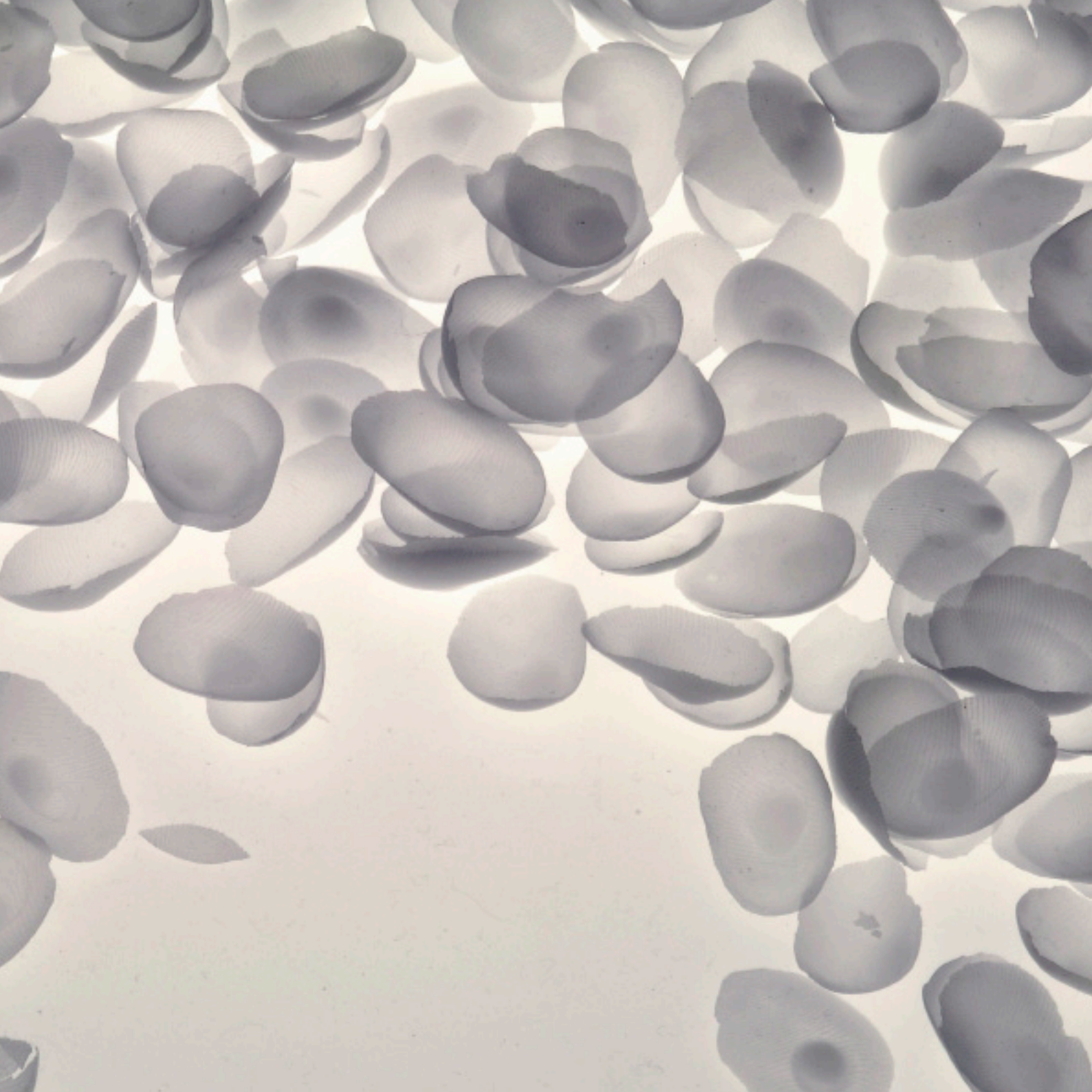
Beeswax, lightbox, dress making pins















Punctuate the Night

Studio tests and proposed artwork that begin by modifying a copy of Stephen Hawking's book *A Brief History of Time*

Opposite:
Studio test (2009)
Digital print
21 x 21cm

Pages 75-76:
Studio test - pages altered from Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (2009)

Pages 77-78:
Studio test - proposed lightbox work - *Punctuate the Night* (2009)



The first of the three parts in all the volumes of the series is a general introduction to the study of the subject.

The second part is a study of the history of the subject, and the third part is a study of the present state of the subject.

The first part of the series is a general introduction to the study of the subject, and the second part is a study of the history of the subject.

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Black Holes Ain't So Black

Before 1970, my research on general relativity had concentrated mainly on the question of whether or not there had been a big bang singularity. However, one evening in November that year, shortly after the birth of my daughter, Lucy, I started to think about black holes as I was getting into bed. My disability makes this rather a slow process, so I had plenty of time. At that date there was no precise definition of which points in space-time lay inside a black hole and which lay outside. I had already discussed with Roger Penrose the idea of defining a black hole as the set of events from which it was not possible to escape to a large distance, which is now the generally accepted definition. It means that the boundary of the black hole, the event horizon, is formed by the paths in space-time of rays of light that just fail to get away from the black hole, hovering forever just on the edge (Fig. 7.1). It is a bit like running away from the police and just managing to keep one step ahead but not being able to get clear away!

Suddenly I realized that the paths of these light rays could

is that in it the universe is not infinite in space, but neither does space have any boundary. Gravity is so strong that space is bent round onto itself, making it rather like the surface of the earth. If one keeps traveling in a certain direction on the surface of the earth, one never comes up against an impenetrable barrier or falls over the edge, but eventually comes back to where one started. In the first Friedmann model, space is just like this, but with three dimensions instead of two for the earth's surface. The fourth dimension, time, is also finite in extent, but it is like a line with two ends or boundaries.

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recollapsed, space is bent in on itself, like the surface of the earth. It is therefore finite in extent. In the second kind of model, which expands forever, space is bent the other way, like the surface of a saddle. So in this case space is infinite. Finally, in the third kind of Friedmann model, with just the critical rate of expansion, space is flat (and therefore is infinite).

But which Friedmann model describes our universe? Will the universe eventually stop expanding and start contracting, or will it expand forever? To answer this question we need to know the present rate of expansion of the universe and its present average density. If the density is less than a certain critical value, determined by the rate of expansion, the gravitational attraction will be too weak to halt the expansion.

Studio test - proposed work -
Collected Ends (A Brief History of Time)
(2009)
Paper, glass bottle
7 x 7cm



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Installation photography for *Alone Together* and *Wigga* exhibitions by John Brash

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<http://www.jointadventures.org/opalka> (Roman Opalka) viewed 11/10/06
<http://www.martincreed.com/> viewed 11/10/06
<http://www.nga.gov.au/International/Catalogue/Detail.cfm?IRM=115571> (Roman Opalka) viewed 11/10/06
<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/turnerprize/2002/banner.htm> (Fiona Banner) viewed 11/10/06
http://www.themodernword.com/pynchon/pynchon_essays_luddite.html (Thomas Pynchon article: "Is it O.K. to be a Luddite?") viewed 1/03/07
<http://www.ubu.com/> (Concrete Writing) viewed 11/10/06
<http://www.zwirnerandwirth.com/exhibitions/2003/022003Martin/> (Agnes Martin) viewed 11/10/06

CURRICULUM VITAE

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- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1979 | Born Canberra, Australia |
| 2003 | Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy and English), University of New South Wales, Sydney |
| 2005 | Master of Art by Coursework (Painting), College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney |
| 2006- | Commenced Master of Art (Fine Art), RMIT University, Melbourne |

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2008 | Alone Together, Bus Gallery, Melbourne |
|------|--|

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2008 | Wigga, Shifted Gallery Melbourne
Siemens/RMIT Fine Art Scholarship Award Exhibition, RMIT Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne |
| 2007 | Art and Text, Podspace Gallery, This Is Not Art (TINA) Newcastle, New South Wales
Bakker & Bakker, Gallery 124, Armidale, New South Wales |
| 2006 | Siemens/RMIT Fine Art Scholarship Award Exhibition, RMIT Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne
Jenny Birt Award, CoFA Exhibition and Performance Space, College of Fine Arts, Sydney |
| 2005 | Thai-Australian Contemporary Prints, 2005, Chiangmai University Art Museum, Chiangmai, Thailand
Imaging the Land, CoFA Exhibition and Performance Space, College of Fine Arts, Sydney
CoFA Annual '05, College of Fine Arts, Sydney |

AWARDS

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| 2008 | Recipient of the Siemens/RMIT Fine Art Scholarship Award, RMIT Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne |
| 2006 | Recipient of the Jenny Birt Award, CoFA Exhibition and Performance Space, COFA, Sydney
Shortlisted, Siemens/RMIT Fine Art Scholarship Award, RMIT Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne |

CRITICAL FEEDBACK

Silence is golden

IF YOU enjoyed the wonderful Australian film *Noise*, you might favour Jeremy Bakker's compellingly "quiet" explorations of the minutiae of sensory perception. There's a particular focus on the aural realm — as in *Tinnitus*, an abstracted graph evoking marker-pen scratchiness and the slow resistance of inked Texta felt. Painted ear plugs



assemble on a miniature plinth, a curious cultural relic of human hearing and manipulated non-hearing. Elsewhere, 6365 full stops collect in a tiny medical bottle, only to escape on to a drawing nearby. In the adjacent gallery, Kate Hodgetts' atmospheric docklands video, *Ferris Wheel*, augments Bakker's teasing silences with a moody soundtrack, but no third man in sight. **FJ**

Jeremy Bakker, *Alone Together*, Kate Hodgetts, *Ferris Wheel*, Bus Gallery, 117 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, until June 28, www.bus117.com

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Frances Johnson 'Silence is Golden'
Metro Arts & Culture, p.17
The Age Newspaper - Friday 20th June 2008

